

## January 11, 2007 - Slaughter Calls for Federal Investment in Stem Cell Research

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M. Speaker,

I rise today not just as a Member of Congress, but also as a microbiologist and a citizen who stands in awe of the life-saving potential we hold in our hands.

During recent years in Washington, politics has often stood in the way of the consensus and conclusions of the scientific community.

One of the victims of that reality has been funding for stem cell research. The opinions of those on both sides of this issue are both heart-felt and sincere. But I hope that today, we can put aside our differences and unite to achieve something that not just our scientists believe in, but that the American people both want and deserve.

New medical technologies have always been met with skepticism and concern. There was a time in America when organ donations were experimental, and blood transfusions were considered too dangerous to consider. And yet today, these procedures are saving lives every hour.

The same will soon be said of embryonic stem cells - if we want it.

We may hear from some today that adult stem cells, cord blood cells, and amniotic fluid cells are just as promising as embryonic stem cells. But while they all show promise and should be researched, none of them offer as much promise as embryonic stem cells.

An overwhelming body of international scientific research has shown embryonic stem cells to be the only type of stem cells capable of becoming any cell type in the body. They are the key to so many of the cures we have long sought after.

Let me provide just one example of how powerful this research could be.

There is growing evidence linking embryonic cell mutations to cancer. At UC San Francisco, scientists have discovered elevated activity of several embryonic stem cell genes in both testicular and breast cancers.

Based on this new finding, scientists are hypothesizing that mis-regulated embryonic stem cell genes could cause or at least advance cancer.

In fact, recent research is showing that up to 20% of all breast tumors are now suspected to originate in stem cells.

Scientists hope to learn more about the functions of genes in the cells that make up tumors. Their examinations could show why stem cells become cancerous and how doctors can treat them.

These breakthroughs could one day eradicate many forms of cancer at their source.

Because of its potential, fully 70 percent of Americans support embryonic stem cell research. And that's not surprising. Nearly everyone has suffered from a disease, or knows someone who has, that embryonic stem cell research could one day cure. Who wouldn't want to end the suffering of their son, sister, father or friend? Why would we choose to deny this hope to millions of Americans?

Nations throughout the world have embraced embryonic stem cell research. Their scientists are taking great strides forward. In the end, enforcing restrictive federal research policies will only ensure that the United States will continue to lose many of our best and brightest scientists in this field to other countries.

M. Speaker, many of history's greatest medical killers now have cures because of scientific research. Tens of millions of lives have been saved as a result. Today, we have the potential to save millions more, and to leave other deadly diseases behind us.

I believe people in wheelchairs will one day walk again. I believe that we can bring about an entirely new form of healthcare in America - one defined by shorter hospital stays, fewer invasive procedures, and increasing benefits to both our patients and our bottom line.

The bill before us today presents an ethical solution to research that could potentially benefit almost every American. It gives our country hope - hope that one day we won't have to watch our mothers die of breast cancer, our grandparents suffer from Alzheimer's, and our own children endure Type I diabetes.

If we fail to fund embryonic stem cell research, I do not believe that we will be able to look our children and grandchildren, our mothers or fathers, or our grandparents in the eye and tell them we did everything we could to help them live a better, healthier, longer, happier life.

I urge my colleagues who have second thoughts about this bill to step back and think of a loved one who could possibly benefit from this research. Your vote today should be clear.